On Culture: Un-Rigging the System

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Friends and partners,

Whether it's about the economy, the legal system, healthcare, or education, we've all probably heard (and maybe repeated) the idea that "the system is rigged." It’s easy to understand why: according to results from our February 2024 Culture Change Tracking Survey, 70% of Americans believe the system is rigged—that a powerful few are manipulating how society works to benefit themselves and hurt the rest of us.

But what we mean by “the system is rigged”—and how we talk about

it—has a big impact on how we feel about solutions.

The idea that the system is rigged certainly isn't new in American culture (and we've covered it before in this newsletter).But because of its increasing dominance in our discourse—and because it's a complex mindset being cued in different ways on all sides of the political spectrum—we must frame it carefully. And, because it's a mindset being cued on all sides of the political spectrum and is becoming more and more dominant as a way people think about how the world works, we can't avoid it because of its complexity.

So how can we talk about America's rigged systems in ways that build demand for un-rigging them in ways that advance justice and equity?

In this month's blog post, I'm sharing two recommendations to help avoid some common pitfalls of system-is-rigged framing and ensure that our communications help people see that our systems can be redesigned to promote justice, equity, and inclusion.

READ THIS MONTH'S BLOG POST

One potential trap of system-is-rigged framing is that it can easily cue fatalistic thinking—the idea that our problems are too big to solve. In the blog, I walk through strategies that can be used to navigate this trap. This includes the importance and power of:

1. explaining specific ways a particular aspect of "the system" is rigged, and
2. offering concrete solutions for how we can *un*-rig that aspect of the system.

The goal is to communicate in ways that prevent people from disengaging, and instead inspire a sense of efficacy: the notion that our systems are *designed*, and together, we can redesign them to work in ways that promote justice.

In the next few months we'll be releasing a full set of findings on how to use system-is-rigged framing, including tested values for social justice communicators to use to build support for change. Stay tuned!

In partnership,



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ANNOUNCEMENT

FrameWorks is moving away from X (formerly Twitter). We hope you'll stay in conversation with us on LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube where we will continue sharing research updates, new resources, and framing tips!

UP NEXT!

FRAMING SOCIAL ISSUES DURING AN ELECTION SEASON: Q&A VIDEO SHORTS (COMING THIS MONTH!) | In April's *On Culture* newsletter we asked you to share your questions about how to frame social issues during an election season. (My colleagues wrote an article with some good advice here.) Very soon, we'll be sharing a series of short YouTube videos with our answers to some of the most frequent questions we heard—from how to talk about democracy, to how to remain hopeful amidst heightened tension and fear. Make sure you're subscribed to our YouTube channel to see these videos as soon as they are released!

TALKING ABOUT RIGGED SYSTEMS | In this month's blog post, we share some findings about effective ways of communicating about rigged systems. Later this year, we'll be sharing a full research report with recommendations for how to productively use system-is-rigged thinking to talk about structural racism and build support for social change.

NEW FROM FRAMEWORKS

ARTICLE (STAT NEWS): TELLING NEW STORIES CAN HELP PEOPLE SEE THE VALUE OF VACCINES: In this new article, FrameWorks Senior Advisor, Julie Sweetland, explains how framing can help public health communicators cut through disinformation and reclaim the public conversation about vaccines. In the context of recent outbreaks of previously eradicated diseases and weakening vaccination protections, she shares insights into more effective ways of communicating about vaccines to build public understanding of their role in creating healthier communities.

TAKE ME TO THE ARTICLE

A NEW NARRATIVE FOR TALKING ABOUT KIDS: We often hear that children are our future; that "it takes a village;" that investing in children is a moral and economic imperative. And yet, we hesitate to make significant investments in our nation's kids and families and rarely prioritize their health and wellbeing, especially when it comes to supporting children of color. This month, we released a new research-based framing strategy—in partnership with Leading for Kids—that builds broad support for solutions that advance the wellbeing of our nation's children and families.

EXPLORE THE RESOURCES

NEW TOOLKIT FOR BETTER REPORTING ON GUN VIOLENCE: Although news coverage of gun violence can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and make it seem inevitable, there is an opportunity to tell better stories to help minimize harm and make it clear that change is possible. This new toolkit, developed in partnership with our friends from the Philadelphia Center for Gun Violence Reporting (PCGVR) and the Stoneleigh Foundation, includes guidance to help communicators tell more complete, humanizing stories to build support for a public health approach to gun violence prevention.

READ THE TOOLKIT

SPOTLIGHT ON CULTURE CHANGERS

NEW TOOL FROM THE URBAN INSTITUTE: EQUITY RESOURCE NAVIGATOR | This new, user-centric tool from the Urban Institute is designed to help those committed to advancing equity through local government find resources to help drive their work. It includes resources on topics ranging from communications to community engagement. Check it out!

THE WELLBEING PROJECT: VIDEO SERIES ON CHANGEMAKER WELLBEING | Our friends at the Wellbeing Project recently launched a new video series on supporting the health and wellbeing of social changemakers. Take a look at the first video for insights from Rohini Nilekani and Melinda French Gates on how to amplify our potential for enacting transformative change and of the importance of supporting access to wellbeing resources.

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